

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA
Orangeburg, South Carolina

HEARING #18-11718 APRIL 12, 2018 6:00 P.M.

DOCKET NO. 2017-28-S

SYNERGY UTILITIES, L.P. – *Application of for Approval of
Sewer Rates, Terms and Conditions*

**TRANSCRIPT OF TESTIMONY
AND PROCEEDINGS**

VOLUME 1 OF 2

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Swain E. WHITFIELD,
CHAIRMAN; Comer H. ‘Randy’ RANDALL, VICE CHAIRMAN;
and COMMISSIONERS John E. ‘Butch’ HOWARD, Elliott
F. ELAM, Jr., Robert T. ‘Bob’ BOCKMAN, and G.
O’Neal HAMILTON

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Legal Advisory Staff

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Technical Advisory Staff; Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC,
Court Reporter; and Afton Ellison, Hearing Room Assistant

APPEARANCES:

***SCOTT ELLIOTT, ESQUIRE, and CHARLES P. COOK,
ESQUIRE,*** representing SYNERGY UTILITIES, APPLICANT

***FLORENCE P. BELSER, ESQUIRE, and ANDREW M.
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OF REGULATORY STAFF

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: I'll call this hearing of the South Carolina Public Service Commission to order and welcome all of you all. Tonight we are here for a public hearing, to hear from you. We have the merits part of our case in our hearing room in our chambers in Columbia on April 19th, at 10:30 a.m. But a lot of times in these cases we come out in the local community so that we can hear from you after normal business hours, to make it easy on those of you who are customers of the company that's before us, so that you can come out and speak. And tonight that's why we're here, to hear from you.

So before I start – there will be some ground rules given by the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff, and also by our attorney. But before I start and turn it over to them, I want to at least introduce everybody and let you know who we are and just a tad about what we do. To my far right, we have Commissioner Elliott Elam, who represents the Second Congressional District. Immediately beside him, we have Commissioner Bob Bockman, who represents the Sixth Congressional District. To my right, we do have a lady on the

1 Commission, Commissioner Lib Fleming, who
2 represents the Fourth District, who couldn't be
3 with us tonight. On my far left, we have
4 Commissioner Butch Howard, who represents the First
5 District. Beside him, we have Commissioner O'Neal
6 Hamilton, who represents the Seventh District.
7 Beside him, we have Commissioner Randy Randall, who
8 represents the Third District. And I'm Swain
9 Whitfield, and I represent the Fifth Congressional
10 District. And beside me is our attorney, Mr.
11 Randall Dong, who is one of our staff attorneys at
12 the South Carolina Public Service Commission.

13 And before I go any further, at this time, I'm
14 going to take appearances from the parties that are
15 involved in this case, so you'll know who everyone
16 is, and then I'll go to the South Carolina Office
17 of Regulatory Staff for some instructions.

18 So at this time, who's representing the
19 company?

20 **MR. ELLIOTT:** Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. I'm
21 Scott Elliott. I represent the company in this
22 case. With me is Charles Cook, co-counsel. I
23 would note for the Commission and for our customers
24 that Mr. Keith Parnell is here with his business
25 manager. And we'll stay at the end of the meeting

1 and answer any questions that anybody might have.
2 We appreciate you having this hearing down here,
3 and we're happy to be here.

4 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Mr. Elliott.
5 Thank you for offering to stay and meet with folks.
6 As Commissioners can't answer questions, we
7 certainly appreciate you offering to do that.

8 South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff.

9 **MR. BATEMAN:** Good evening, Mr. Chairman and
10 members of the Commission. My name is Andrew
11 Bateman. I'm an attorney with the South Carolina
12 Office of Regulatory Staff, and along with me is
13 Ms. Florence Belser. Thank you.

14 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you. Before I go
15 back to Mr. Dong to read the docket and get us
16 started, Mr. Bateman, I'm going to call on you if
17 you want to give a little ground rules for
18 tonight's hearing.

19 **MR. BATEMAN:** Certainly. Thank you. As I
20 just mentioned, my name is Andrew Bateman. I'm an
21 attorney with the South Carolina Office of
22 Regulatory Staff. And as Chairman Whitfield just
23 mentioned, I'm going to briefly go over just a few
24 of the ground rules or the rules of the Public
25 Service Commission and the Office of Regulatory

1 Staff in this proceeding.

2 The Public Service Commission is hosting this
3 hearing tonight, and the agency I work for – the
4 Office of Regulatory Staff, frequently called ORS –

5 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Hold on one second, Mr.
6 Bateman.

7 **MR. BATEMAN:** Sure.

8 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Can everybody hear him
9 okay? Can everybody hear him okay? I wasn't sure
10 if your mic was working, but it sounds like they
11 can hear you, Mr. Bateman.

12 **MR. BATEMAN:** And if you can't, just let me
13 know and I'll be happy to move closer to a mic or
14 speak louder.

15 The agency I work for, ORS, and the Public
16 Service Commission are completely separate
17 agencies. ORS is charged with representing the
18 public interest. ORS presents its testimony for
19 consideration to the Commission, presided over by
20 these Commissioners before you. This hearing is
21 for you to share your thoughts about Synergy
22 Utilities, Incorporated's request to increase its
23 rates. The Commission scheduled this night hearing
24 because they know it is significant to you and they
25 want to hear from you. What you have to say is

1 very important.

2 Please know that, if you speak tonight, what
3 you say becomes part of the official record of this
4 case. Your testimony will be sworn and recorded by
5 the court reporter, Ms. Wheat. The Commission will
6 keep in mind what you say when they deliberate and
7 make a decision on this case. Tonight's session
8 affords the public the opportunity to testify on
9 the rate Application.

10 If you speak tonight, either Ms. Belser or
11 myself may ask you some questions. The attorneys
12 for Synergy also may ask you questions. The
13 Commissioners also may ask you questions. Please
14 do not be offended if we do. It's simply because
15 we want to learn more about what you're saying. On
16 the other hand, please do not be offended if we do
17 not ask you questions.

18 As to the Commission, the Commissioners are
19 the decision-makers and they must decide the cases
20 and matters that are filed and pending before the
21 Commission. The Commissioners are made subject to
22 and bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct.
23 Additionally, the employees of the Commission are
24 required to observe and follow the Code of Judicial
25 Conduct, as well. Just like a circuit court judge

1 or a family court judge, the Commissioners must
2 adhere to the rules and standards in the Code of
3 Judicial Conduct. Therefore, while the
4 Commissioners can ask you questions, they cannot
5 answer your questions. They are prohibited by law
6 from answering questions pertaining to matters such
7 as this case, which they must then decide. So
8 please do not get frustrated if you ask questions
9 during your testimony and no one answers. They
10 can't. And the Commission's attorneys here cannot.
11 More likely than not, the Commissioners know the
12 answer and would love to answer you, but the rules
13 prevent them from answering.

14 If you do have questions, I have fellow
15 employees from ORS here tonight who can talk with
16 you. With me, I have Mr. Willie Morgan, Deputy
17 Director of ORS' Utility Services Department, and
18 Matt Schellinger, a regulatory analyst in the ORS
19 Utility Services Department. We also have Ms.
20 Nanette Edwards, the Acting Executive Director of
21 ORS. Both Willie, Matt, and Ms. Edwards would be
22 happy to answer any questions that you've got
23 throughout this proceeding tonight. From my
24 understanding, we've also got some representatives
25 of Synergy present, and I think that Mr. Elliott

1 mentioned Mr. Parnell and his business manager just
2 a second ago. We've also – ORS has provided these
3 pamphlets [indicating]. I believe they're
4 scattered throughout the room, and we can make
5 these available to you upon request. And they're
6 on the table out there at the front. On this
7 pamphlet you'll see that ORS has a 1-800 number, if
8 you'd like to call our Consumer Services Department
9 at a later date. I can give that to you after the
10 hearing, I can give it to you right now – I'll go
11 ahead and read it off. The number is 1-800-922-
12 1531. Again, after the hearing, I'd be happy to
13 speak with anyone about that number or any other
14 questions that you may have.

15 Our staff is there from at least 8:30 a.m. to
16 5 p.m., and you can leave a message if you don't
17 have the opportunity to call during office hours.
18 Someone will call you back.

19 Please remember that we're all here tonight to
20 listen to you. You'll be treated with courtesy and
21 respect. In turn, please be considerate and
22 respectful to the Commission as you direct your
23 remarks to them.

24 Thank you for being here, and thank you for
25 your attention during my opening remarks.

1 Mr. Chairman, turning back to you, I ask that
2 tonight's sign-in sheets be marked and entered into
3 the record as the first hearing exhibit. Thank
4 you.

5 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Tonight's sign-in sheets
6 will be marked and entered in as Hearing Exhibit 1,
7 taking care of that.

8 At this time, I'll turn this over to our
9 attorney, Mr. Dong. Before I do that, I understand
10 that we have City Councilman Hannah in here? Are
11 you with us? City Councilman Hannah?

12 **COUNCILMAN HANNAH:** [Indicating.]

13 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay. I understand you
14 don't wish to speak, but you are here. And, sir, I
15 would like to say thank you for working with our
16 Staff at the PSC to find a venue. Even though
17 we're a public agency as well, oftentimes we have a
18 hard time finding locations, and we'd like to thank
19 Orangeburg City Council and thank you for allowing
20 us the use of your facility. Thank you, sir.

21 And with that, I'll turn it over to Mr. Dong,
22 our attorney.

23 **MR. DONG:** Good evening. Is that on? Can you
24 hear? Okay. I want to thank Mr. Bateman for the
25 excellent summary he gave. There's not a lot I

1 have to add to what he said. I would like to
2 remind you all to please silence your cell phones.
3 And, as Mr. Bateman said, your testimony here is
4 just as though it were given at the merits hearing
5 next week. So be aware that, if you testify this
6 evening, you will not be permitted to testify
7 again, a second time, a week from today. So, but
8 it will be treated exactly the same tonight or next
9 week.

10 Finally, we would ask that you try to keep
11 your remarks brief. We do have a timer and we are
12 asking people to keep their remarks to three
13 minutes if you can.

14 With that, I'm going to call the witnesses in
15 order, who have signed up to speak. And if you
16 haven't signed up to speak and you do desire to
17 speak, you need to go and find our personnel and
18 actually sign the sign-up sheet. But I'm going to
19 go ahead and start with Ms. Williams. And if you
20 would, when you come to the podium, if you would
21 give your full name and give your address, and be
22 sworn.

23 [Witness affirmed]

24 <

25 <

1 THEREUPON came,

2 **B A R B A R A J O H N S O N W I L L I A M S ,**
3 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

4 **MR. RICHARDSON:** Please state your name and
5 address, for the record.

6 **WITNESS:** First of all, let me say good
7 evening. Thank you all for allowing us to come.

8 My name is Barbara Johnson Williams, and I
9 live at 1843 Lake Drive.

10 We have been trying to work with Midlands,
11 a/k/a Synergy, for the last 15 to 20 years about
12 the sewer problem and high cost we are paying for
13 sewer. We pay a surcharge or a service charge or
14 whatever they call it for City water to DPU through
15 Midlands, or Synergy. And service charges for
16 sewer, as well as sublet treatment fee, again
17 through Synergy.

18 Our total bill average is about \$90. This is
19 not inclusive of our utility bill that we have with
20 DPU. We're being told that groundwater is
21 infiltrating the system and therefore causing our
22 bill to be as high, each month. There is no meter;
23 therefore, our bills, all of our bills, look the
24 same. We are told by some neighbors that they do
25 not pay for sewer. And, again, the cost is being

1 passed on to us.

2 We have met with Mr. Parnell, our City
3 Council, our County Council, DPU. We met with ORS
4 and PCS and our legislative delegation. And we
5 tried telling our story, and still nothing is being
6 done. Yet at this hour, once again, they come to
7 you seeking rate increases. How can you all
8 justifiably grant them a rate increase when they
9 allow the system to continue to be broken? Synergy
10 claimed they follow PCS rules and regulations. How
11 is that, when they neglect to repair a broken
12 system, passed along, again, in costs to us?

13 We had AECOM come out and did an evaluation
14 study and pointed out several areas that needed
15 repairs, and they have done, if any, little. And
16 still there are a lot of work to seemingly be done,
17 and, again, we continue to pay the high costs.

18 As the number of homes in our community
19 increases, so does our sewer bill. We would not
20 have a problem with paying a rate increase, but why
21 should we pay high rates when nothing is being done
22 about the repairs – or if any, little. We feel any
23 rate is too big when we've been cheated out of the
24 monies without even minimal service so far as
25 repairing the system. With the rate increase,

1 we're looking at the possibility of \$100 sewer, and
2 Synergy will be awarded a rate increase with
3 minimal or low repairs to the system again. They
4 have not done anything yet, so what is to say
5 they're going to do the repairs that are needed
6 right now? It is indicative of this, because my
7 bill for the month of March was \$88.20. We pay our
8 taxes, we pay our bills, and we feel we should be
9 compensated –

10 [3-minute bell]

11 – but again, that's not done. One other
12 sentence.

13 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Continue on, Ms.
14 Williams.

15 **WITNESS:** Okay.

16 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** You continue right on.
17 Don't worry about it.

18 **WITNESS:** All right. And for this reason and
19 others, we humbly request that you do not grant
20 Synergy the rate increase. Thank you.

21 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you. Ms. Williams,
22 if you'll just stay right here at the podium just a
23 minute, and let me check and see if there are
24 questions from either the parties or from the
25 Commissioners. I want to thank you for your

1 testimony, and thank you for appearing tonight and
2 participating. Let me see if there are any
3 questions.

4 Mr. Elliott or Mr. Cook, any questions for
5 this witness?

6 **MR. ELLIOTT:** Mr. Chairman, I have no
7 questions for Ms. Williams, but I appreciate her
8 coming out.

9 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

10 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** All right.

11 **MR. COOK:** Mr. Chairman, no questions.

12 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay. South Carolina
13 Office of Regulatory Staff.

14 **MS. BELSER:** Briefly. May I be seated, so
15 that I can they use this mic?

16 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Absolutely. I want you
17 to be heard, and that'll help – our court reporter
18 will appreciate it, too.

19 **MS. BELSER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

21 **BY MS. BELSER:**

22 **Q** Good evening.

23 **A** Good evening.

24 **Q** Just a couple of things. I think I know the answer to
25 this question but I want to make sure it's on the

1 record. Who provides water service to your subdivision?

2 **A** DPU.

3 **Q** That's Orangeburg?

4 **A** Yes, ma'am.

5 **Q** And is that metered service?

6 **A** Yes – which, for the sewer?

7 **Q** No, ma'am, just the water.

8 **A** Yes. Yes.

9 **Q** And you mentioned someone had come out and did a study
10 that noted some errors or corrections? Who was that –

11 **A** Yes.

12 **Q** – that did that study?

13 **A** A – is it ACom? AECOM?

14 **Q** AECOM?

15 **A** Yes, ma'am.

16 **Q** And who asked for that study to be done?

17 **A** We did. We did, through our County Council.

18 **Q** And do you know if a copy of that study was provided to
19 Synergy?

20 **A** I think it was.

21 **Q** Thank you, very much.

22 **A** Yes, I'm almost certain it was. Thank you.

23 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Hang on, Ms. Williams,
24 one more second. Everybody's going to be a pro
25 after you.

1 [Laughter]

2 Let me see if there are any Commissioner
3 questions and then we'll let you step down.

4 Commissioner Elam.

5 **COMMISSIONER ELAM:** Yes.

6 **EXAMINATION**

7 **BY COMMISSIONER ELAM:**

8 **Q** Good evening.

9 **A** Good evening.

10 **Q** You said an average bill was around \$90?

11 **A** Around \$90. And that – it depends on the infiltration
12 of water into the system. It could be higher.

13 **Q** Okay. Is that just the sewer?

14 **A** Just the sewer, yes, sir.

15 **Q** And it's a separate bill from –

16 **A** Separate bill.

17 **Q** And that's for one month.

18 **A** For one month.

19 **COMMISSIONER ELAM:** Thank you.

20 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay. Thank you,
21 Commissioner Elam.

22 Commissioners, any other Commissioner
23 questions for Ms. Williams?

24 [No response]

25 <

EXAMINATION**BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

Q I've got a couple for you, Ms. Williams. I think Commissioner Elam cleared up one of them for me, and that was your sewer bill you just quoted to him. And you've also stated that your water's provided through the City of Orangeburg, DPU, right?

A Yes.

Q The problems you're having, you state these problems are currently ongoing; is that correct?

A Yes.

Q And so we're not just talking about this last year. How long has this been occurring? How long has this been going on?

A I'm going to say – because, as far back as I can remember, my bill might have been something like \$35-\$40. But for the last five, six, seven years, it really started creeping up. But as long as I can remember – I'm going to go back about 10 years or more, maybe.

Q I was talking about the problems –

A The problems with the –

Q – with the inflow and infiltration –

A – infiltration?

Q And the problems you've had with your – so, the problems you were speaking of.

1 **A** I'm going to go back – I've been president probably
2 around – I'm going to go back between five and ten
3 years, might've been more. Somebody else will get up
4 and they may have that answer, but I know at least five
5 to ten years, if not more.

6 **Q** Well, let me ask you – you've answered a couple – I
7 think in your testimony, you stated you've talked with
8 the company. You mentioned a study had been done. You
9 also mentioned you had gone to ORS, as well. I heard
10 you mention a lot of things in there, but DHEC. Have
11 you – has DHEC been involved?

12 **A** We – oh, I've called. Yes, whenever there is a problem.
13 For example, we had a situation in the back end of our
14 neighborhood wherein there were complaints about raw
15 sewage being aboveground. We called DHEC. There was a
16 situation in front of my home wherein, again, I think it
17 was last year or year before last, I had called DHEC.
18 So we've been – whenever I send something to maybe –
19 because I try to copy you all, ORS, and probably the
20 Public Service Commission, or if I send it maybe to Mr.
21 Parnell I try to copy them. But we've been in contact
22 with DHEC, yes.

23 **Q** And could you elaborate a little more on the situation
24 in front of your home?

25 **A** It was a breakage. We felt strongly that it was from

1 the sewer, so we called DHEC. I think we called DPU,
2 and we called Midland, now Synergy. And I think the
3 determination was that it may not have been the sewer.
4 I'm not sure. Because the cover's so tight, we don't
5 know what's going on under there. It might be
6 indicative of our bill being as high as it is, because
7 sometimes when you put a patch and you cover something
8 up, you don't know what's running underground.

9 **Q** Who determined it wasn't the sewer?

10 **A** Mr. Parnell.

11 **Q** Okay. Not anybody from ORS, somebody from the company?

12 **A** Right, uh-huh.

13 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Okay. Again, as has been
14 stated tonight, we can't answer questions, but I
15 would certainly tell you the company has offered to
16 stay after we're gone and talk with you, and so has
17 ORS, and they've identified their personnel on each
18 side. So I would certainly encourage you to take
19 advantage of the opportunity you have here tonight.

20 **WITNESS:** Yes.

21 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** And certainly thank you
22 for your testimony. I don't think there are any
23 further questions, and you may step down.

24 **WITNESS:** Okay. Thank you all, again.

25 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

1 **MR. DONG:** John Murdaugh?

2 [Witness affirmed]

3 THEREUPON came,

4 **J O H N M U R D A U G H ,**

5 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

6 **MR. RICHARDSON:** State your name and address.

7 **WITNESS:** Okay. Good evening, Commissioners.

8 My name is Johnny Murdaugh, and I reside at 859

9 Uncle Bud Road, in Orangeburg. That is the

10 subdivision next to Ms. Williams' subdivision.

11 I guess, after hearing the number of times – I
12 mean, the number of years she's been there, I'm the
13 newbie. I've been here in that location about five
14 years. And basically I'm asking – I do not support
15 this increase. I'm asking that you deny Synergy's
16 request.

17 I've lived in this location for about five
18 years. When I started, the price per month was
19 about \$23. Currently, it is now about \$90 – \$82,
20 \$85, \$88. Matter of fact, I have my bill-pay
21 sitting at \$85 every month, and I've had that set
22 almost two years. So if you do the math, that
23 comes up to about a 350 percent increase over a
24 five-year period.

25 In addition, when I connected to the system, I

1 had to pay a deposit to both Synergy, as well as I
2 had to pay some additional fees to DPU.

3 So, again, I request that you deny Synergy's
4 request, because if it is requested – I mean, if it
5 is passed, I'm going to look at the possibility of
6 getting a septic system because of the expenses.
7 Eighty-five dollars a month, if you think about it,
8 over the five years I would've paid for it by now.

9 And the same as with Ms. Williams, it is a
10 separate bill, so I pay \$85 a month for sewage
11 only. I do not get any rates like – I've been
12 looking at the DPU bill, and it's broken down by
13 how many cubic yards or cubic water or whatever, I
14 get the breakdown from DPU; I do not get a
15 breakdown from this bill. It just states that – it
16 is broken down based on the different divisions,
17 but as far as how much sewage or wastewater was
18 collected from my property, it is not.

19 And that's pretty much my statement. Thank
20 you.

21 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** All right, Mr. Murdaugh.
22 Thank you for your testimony. Let me see if there
23 are any questions, if you'll just remain with us
24 just a minute?

25 **WITNESS:** Sure.

1 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Mr. Elliott and Mr. Cook,
2 any questions for this witness?

3 **MR. ELLIOTT:** No questions of Mr. Murdaugh. I
4 appreciate you coming out, though. Thank you.

5 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Ms. Belser or Mr.
6 Bateman, ORS?

7 **MS. BELSER:** No questions. Thank you, very
8 much.

9 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioners.

10 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Mr. Chairman.

11 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Yes, sir, Commissioner
12 Hamilton.

13 **EXAMINATION**

14 **BY COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:**

15 **Q** Mr. Murdaugh, do you get one bill or two bills? You get
16 a water bill separate from a sewer bill; it's not a
17 combined bill?

18 **A** That is correct. DPU, I receive the electric and water
19 on one bill; and then the sewer bill comes separate.

20 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Thank you, sir.

21 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Commissioner Howard.

22 **EXAMINATION**

23 **BY COMMISSIONER HOWARD:**

24 **Q** Is that a monthly bill?

25 **A** Yes, it is.

1 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** Thank you.

2 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Any other Commissioner
3 questions for this witness, Mr. Murdaugh?

4 [No response]

5 **EXAMINATION**

6 **BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

7 **Q** Mr. Murdaugh, I do have one for you. Your bill that you
8 described as \$85 a month, does it break it down, the
9 bill, as collection only or collection and treatment? I
10 know you say you get a separate water bill from DPU, and
11 we're not – I'm just talking about your sewer bill, now.
12 Does it break it down?

13 **A** Yes, it does. It's collection and treatment, then some
14 – and I guess the treatment is from DPU. So it's just
15 that portion. It's divided up in those two parts.

16 **Q** Do you know what the collection portion of that bill is,
17 of the \$85?

18 **A** I did not bring a copy of my bill.

19 **VOICE:** I've got a copy of my bill

20 [indicating].

21 **WITNESS:** [Indicating.] So, sewage service is,
22 well, \$23.03. DPU treatment is \$39.39. And
23 service fee by Orangeburg DPU is \$25.78, which the
24 total ends up \$89.57.

25 **BY CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:**

1 **Q** Okay. So you have a collection portion and a treatment
2 portion and then there's another portion by DPU; is that
3 right?

4 **A** That is correct. Treatment by Orangeburg DPU and
5 service fee by Orangeburg DPU.

6 **Q** Service fee.

7 **A** That's correct.

8 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** That's all I have. If
9 there are no further Commissioner questions –

10 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Mr. Chairman.

11 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Yes, sir, Commissioner
12 Hamilton.

13 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** I wonder if a copy of
14 Mr. Murdaugh's bill could be placed in the record.

15 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Is that your bill, sir?

16 **WITNESS:** This is not my bill.

17 **VOICE:** It's mine. It's mine.

18 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Well, hold on one second.

19 **MR. ELLIOTT:** We stipulate any bill into the
20 record, for your bill.

21 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** You okay with that, Mr.
22 Elliott?

23 **MR. ELLIOTT:** Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

24 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** No objection?

25 **MR. ELLIOTT:** None.

1 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Well, she might want to
2 redact – yeah. Mr. Murdaugh, we're going to let
3 you file a late-filed exhibit by mail, and we want
4 to let you work with our staff and redact her
5 account number and any other pertinent information,
6 because we realize there's information on those
7 bills that shouldn't be out there, because this is
8 going in the record.

9 **WITNESS:** Okay.

10 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** And if you need to get
11 with her and our staff – and Mr. Elliott seems to
12 have no, and Mr. Cook, seems to have no objection.
13 No objection from ORS?

14 **MS. BELSER:** No objection, Mr. Chairman. But
15 I'll be glad to meet with her and to do –

16 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Can you facilitate –

17 **MS. BELSER:** – the redaction that –

18 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Ms. Belser, can you
19 facilitate that for us?

20 **MS. BELSER:** Yes, sir, I'll be glad to do
21 that. And I'll get it to Ms. Wheat, with copies to
22 Mr. Elliott and Mr. Cook.

23 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Ms. Belser, we're going
24 to identify that as Hearing Exhibit 2 and hold it
25 open until you get that to us, okay?

1 **MS. BELSER:** All right.

2 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** All right. Thank you.

3 Any further questions – Commissioner Hamilton,
4 does that satisfy your request?

5 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Yes, sir. Yes.

6 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Any further questions of
7 this witness?

8 [No response]

9 If not, you may step down, Mr. Murdaugh.
10 Thank you for being here.

11 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

12 **MR. DONG:** Gwen Gillis?

13 [Witness affirmed]

14 THEREUPON came,

15 **G W E N D O L Y N G . G I L L I S ,**

16 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

17 **MR. RICHARDSON:** State your name and address,
18 please.

19 **WITNESS:** My name is Gwendolyn Gillis. I live
20 at 1805 Northwood Drive, in Orangeburg, the
21 subdivision of Northwood Estate. I've been a
22 resident there for approximately 23 years.

23 When I first arrived in Northwood Estate, my
24 sewage bill – which you have here [indicating] –
25 was \$26.70.

1 In 2007, my sewage bill rose to \$39.72. At
2 that time, the sublet treatment was by Orangeburg
3 DPU. It was \$16.69.

4 In December of 2014, my sewage bill rose to
5 \$65.34. Sublet treatment by DPU was \$24.41. It
6 also included a service fee by DPU of \$17.90.

7 And we are now in 2018. And in 2018, in
8 February, my sewage bill is \$89.56. Sublet
9 treatment by Orangeburg DPU, \$40.75. And a service
10 fee by Orangeburg DPU, \$25.78.

11 Now, what happens here is I don't think
12 Synergy is entitled to another increase. DPU has a
13 meter that runs through everyone's home,
14 approximately over 100 homes out there. And,
15 therefore, we have a meter; we have a usage of
16 water. Now, if something happens to the pipes in
17 my house, going to the street, to DPU's machine, I
18 am responsible for fixing the pipe. And I feel as
19 if Synergy has a responsibility to us to fix the
20 damage that's been going on over a decade.

21 In addition to that, I'd like to know how and
22 why, if I go on vacation for a month or two, I
23 still have to pay this sewage bill. I don't
24 understand that, and I'd like somebody to answer
25 that question for me. I'm not there, I'm not using

1 the system. If I were to come back, had I not paid
2 it, I would not be able to take a shower, I would
3 not be able to flush the toilet.

4 So for them to get an increase, I hope and
5 pray that this does not happen. It's almost like
6 we're being charged for services that we don't get.
7 They don't have a responsibility, we don't have a
8 contract, but we're being, more or less, sabotaged.

9 And that's about all I have to say.

10 **CHAIRMAN WHITMAN:** Thank you, Ms. Gillis, for
11 your testimony. Let me see if there are any
12 questions.

13 Mr. Elliott and Mr. Cook?

14 **MR. ELLIOTT:** No questions of Ms. Gillis. I
15 appreciate her coming out.

16 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

17 **CHAIRMAN WHITMAN:** Okay. Office of Regulatory
18 Staff, any questions of this witness?

19 **MS. BELSER:** No questions. Thank you, Ms.
20 Gillis.

21 **CHAIRMAN WHITMAN:** Hold on one second, Ms.
22 Gillis. Let me see if there's any Commissioners.

23 Any Commissioner questions? Commissioners,
24 questions for Ms. Gillis?

25 [No response]

1 Well, if not, thank you for your testimony
2 and, again, I would remind you both parties here
3 have offered to stay after the hearing and talk to
4 you about your questions and concerns. And thank
5 you for your testimony.

6 **WITNESS:** Thank you.

7 **CHAIRMAN WHITMAN:** Yes, ma'am.

8 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

9 Mr. Dong.

10 **MR. DONG:** Angela Brown?

11 [Witness affirmed]

12 THEREUPON came,

13 **A N G E L A B R O W N ,**

14 who, having been first duly affirmed, testified as follows:

15 **MR. RICHARDSON:** State your name and address.

16 **WITNESS:** My name is Angela Brown. I live at
17 1050 Oaklane Drive.

18 I'm a relatively new resident in this
19 community. I just closed on a home in mid-January.
20 So I was not familiar at all with what's going on,
21 but I was told that our wastewater was a separate
22 bill, so I went and I did my due diligence and I
23 signed up to have the services.

24 I had to pay a \$50.78 setup fee, initially,
25 and I only have two bills and they have been \$89,

1 \$86. Like the woman before me, there are times
2 that I have been out of the country, and I can say
3 I haven't used the shower but maybe approximately
4 twice daily or washed clothes once a week. May
5 flush the toilet maybe approximately 14 times a
6 week. But, yet, the bills remain in the \$80s and
7 I'm rarely home, so I don't understand why the bill
8 is so high. I was sharing with Ms. Barbara that my
9 wastewater bill is higher than my electric bill.
10 And I understand the need for a separate bill, but
11 I just don't understand why it has to be so high.

12 So I'm basically here to support my community,
13 and I'm glad that we have an HOA that can bring
14 this situation to light, and I just came to be
15 supportive of my neighborhood because I think that
16 the prices are too high. And I do not support the
17 increase, and I ask that you Commissioners will not
18 grant the request for the increase.

19 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Thank you, Ms. Brown, for
20 your testimony. Let me see if there are any
21 questions.

22 Mr. Elliott, Mr. Cook?

23 **MR. ELLIOTT:** No questions for Ms. Brown. We
24 appreciate you're being here.

25 **CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD:** Office of Regulatory

1 Staff?

2 MS. BELSER: No questions. Thank you, Ms.
3 Brown.

4 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Commissioners?

5 WITNESS: [Indicating.] Oh, sorry.

6 [No response]

7 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: That's all right, I don't
8 I see any. So you may step down and thank you for
9 your testimony.

10 [WHEREUPON, the witness was excused.]

11 Mr. Dong.

12 MR. DONG: These are all the witnesses who
13 have asked to speak tonight, and we thank you for
14 your attendance.

15 CHAIRMAN WHITFIELD: Well, there being no
16 further witnesses at this time, again, we thank you
17 for your participation. I'll remind you that the
18 merits hearing is April 19th in our chambers in
19 Columbia, at 10:30 in the morning. As Mr. Dong
20 said, there will be an opportunity for public
21 comment at the beginning of that hearing. But,
22 again, like he said, if you spoke tonight, you
23 can't speak again. The case will be heard on that
24 date in Columbia. And, again, you have parties
25 willing to stay with you and talk with you and

1 address some of your concerns, since the
2 Commissioners are not able to do that. We're under
3 the Judicial Code.

4 And at this time, this hearing is adjourned.

5 [WHEREUPON, at 6:40 p.m., the hearing in
6 the above-entitled matter was adjourned,
7 to be reconvened April 19, 2018, at 10:30
8 a.m., in the Commission's hearing room at
9 101 Executive Center Drive, Columbia,
10 South Carolina.]

11
12 [WHEREUPON, Hearing Exhibit 1 was marked
13 and received in evidence.]

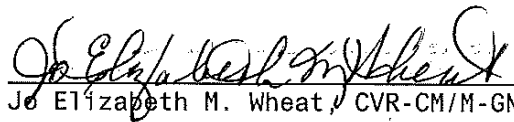
14 [WHEREUPON, Late-Filed Hearing Exhibit
15 No. 2 was marked and received in evidence
16 upon receipt of same: 4/13/18.]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM-GNSC, Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina, do hereby certify that the foregoing is, to the best of my skill and ability, a true and correct transcript of all proceedings had and testimony adduced in a hearing held in the above-captioned matter before the PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA;

That the witnesses appearing during said hearing were affirmed to state the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, on this the 22nd day of May, 2018.


Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC
Hearings Reporter, PSC/SC
My Commission Expires: January 27, 2021.